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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 20 July 1994, at 3 p.m.

President : Mr. DANGUE REWAKA (Gabon)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Butler (Australia), Mr. Dangue Rewaka (Gabon), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (continued)

(h) NARCOTIC DRUGS (continued) (E/1994/30)

The PRESIDENT pointed out that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs had recommended three draft resolutions and four draft decisions for adoption by the Council. The texts of the draft resolutions and draft decisions could be found in chapter I of the Commission's report (E/1994/30).

Draft resolutions I to III

Draft resolutions I to III were adopted.

Draft decisions I to IV

Draft decisions I to IV were adopted.

(j) CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/49/159-E/1994/62 and Add.1 and Add.2)

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the implementation of the World Decade for Cultural Development during 1992-1993.

It was so decided.

(k) UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (E/1994/41)

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) commended the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (E/1994/41) and praised the work of the Office of the Commissioner in providing aid to refugees. The fact that 80 per cent of refugees were women and children was a cause for concern. His delegation appreciated the attempts of UNHCR to provide aid to those victims and stressed that such programmes must be strengthened. Earlier speakers had mentioned the problem of shortage of funds and its effect on refugee programmes in various countries, among them Afghanistan. Four million refugees from Afghanistan were still in Iran and Pakistan, and lack of funds was one factor preventing those who wished to return to the now peaceful areas of Afghanistan from doing so. While it was true that the number of refugees in Afghanistan had decreased marginally from 1992 to 1993, it was unlikely that some 800,000 refugees would be able to return to their homes during 1994.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

There had been a drastic reduction in funding as a result of the UNHCR phasing-down approach, which had placed a heavy burden on Pakistan, particularly since donor countries had reduced their contributions in anticipation of a reduction in need. But the phasing-down process must be delayed until conditions for voluntary repatriation improved. The political parties in Afghanistan were committed to the return of the refugees, and Pakistan had worked to produce favourable conditions for their repatriation. His delegation hoped that, after 16 years in Pakistan, the refugees would soon be able to return home.

Mrs. SILVERA NUÑEZ (Cuba) drew attention to paragraph 108 of the report, which mentioned the situation in Haiti. Cuba had recently found itself in great difficulty as a consequence of the unilateral decision of a neighbouring country with regard to Haitian refugees. That decision affected the sovereignty of the Republic of Cuba because it involved the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, illegally occupied by the United States of America against the will of Cuba. The United States authorities had claimed that the base would be used only to collect those Haitians who qualified for refugee status, but, in fact, Guantanamo Bay was being used as a classification centre to select those who qualified for refugee status from among a much larger group of Haitians. Moreover, since the base was illegally occupied, its use for any purpose whatever was contrary to the will of the Cuban people. The Government of Cuba, itself in a period of economic crisis, must now deal with the Haitian refugee problem in matters ranging from medical care to the repatriation of refugees from Cuba to Haiti. Her delegation thanked UNHCR for working with Cuba to resolve the problem of refugees from Haiti and other countries but felt that the matter should be referred to, in paragraph 108 of the report or elsewhere, in greater detail.

Mr. SAHRAOUI (Observer for Algeria) said, with regard to paragraph 185 of the report, that the large sums expanded on refugee assistance in Algeria were a sign of the importance of UNHCR activities in that country. Paragraph 188, concerning registration of potential voters in the Western Sahara, indicated the willingness of the two parties concerned to cooperate on all levels. Moreover, despite the obstacles mentioned in that paragraph, preliminary voter registration had taken place. However, subsequent events might make the paragraph appear somewhat outdated. The voting process had been blocked by Morocco's refusal to accept representatives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as observers because OAU had admitted the

(Mr. Sahraoui, Algeria)

"Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic" as a member, as explained in paragraphs 28 to 31 of document S/1994/819. UNHCR was closely following the situation and was ready to revise its plans and budget for repatriation in the Western Sahara when that became possible.

Mr. GULEV (Ukraine) said that refugee problems were familiar to his country, which was a prime destination for persons fleeing ethnic conflicts in parts of the former Soviet Union. His Government had always provided assistance to refugees from armed conflicts in neighbouring States. His country was striving to overcome the legacy of pre-Soviet and Soviet social policy, which had been designed to alter the ethnic structure of the population irreversibly by such means as genocide directed against indigenous peoples, artificial famines and deportation of certain ethnic groups. His Government devoted particular attention to the rehabilitation of victims of such repression, the restoration of justice and assistance to returning deportees. The understanding and support of the Office and the international community were needed to help his country confront the problems and tensions attendant upon the return of deportees.

His delegation supported the efforts of UNHCR on behalf of displaced persons and hoped that the measures envisaged in the report on their behalf would yield positive results.

Mr. ZHOU Xikang (China) said that his delegation appreciated the work of UNHCR in aid to displaced persons and refugees, voluntary repatriation, and other refugee problems. It also valued the traditional contributors and non-governmental organizations for their assistance to refugees and, in particular, the efforts of developing countries that provided shelter to refugees despite their own economic difficulties. He hoped that the international community would continue to provide assistance to refugees in Asia, Africa and Latin America, rather than neglecting those victims because of more recent refugee situations elsewhere.

In offering assistance to refugees, UNHCR should obtain the agreement of the concerned countries, follow the Charter and principles of the United Nations and respect the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

Ms. BIRGIN (Australia) said that her delegation supported the candidacies of the Russian Federation, India and Bangladesh for membership in the Executive Committee of UNHCR. The Russian Federation was already a party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of

(Ms. Birgin, Australia)

Refugees, but despite their experience with refugee populations, neither India nor Bangladesh had signed those instruments. Australia wondered when it could expect them to do so.

Mr. SNOUSSI (Observer for Morocco), said, with regard to the remarks of the representative of Algeria, that paragraph 188 was in fact outdated. There was no question of an agreement with regard to the criteria for eligibility to vote in the referendum for self-determination of the people of the Western Sahara, and no reference was made to such an agreement in any other United Nations document.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) drew attention to paragraphs 111 to 113 of the report. Her delegation supported the candidacies of the Russian Federation, India and Bangladesh for membership in the Executive Committee of UNHCR.

Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said that UNHCR carried out extremely important work throughout the world. The demands on it had risen sharply in recent years, as the situation in Rwanda demonstrated. However, the resources available to it for carrying out its immeasurably difficult tasks were not commensurate with the requirements. He appealed to the international community to increase resources substantially so that UNHCR would be able to meet the pressing needs of refugees.

His delegation endorses all the relevant proposals made by the representative of the Office at the preceding meeting, as well as those contained in document E/1994/41.

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/1994/41).

It was so decided.

Mr. LEBEDEV (Russian Federation) introduced draft decision E/1994/L.19 on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh and India an his own delegation. Bearing in mind the pressing problems of refugees and the experience gained in addressing them, and desiring to increase their cooperation with UNHCR, the sponsors had declared their desire to become members of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The draft decision before the Council was similar to earlier texts on similar questions. If the General Assembly adopted the decision on the recommendation of the Council, the question of the election of Bangladesh,

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(Mr. Lebedev, Russian Federation)

India and his own country to the Executive Committee would be included in the agenda of the Council's next session. The sponsors hoped that the draft decision would be adopted by consensus.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.